



MICHAEL CAIN, left, and a Pulsa associate stretch huge mylar panels used in "Light as Truth" exhibit (see Table Talk).

Table Talk:

Garden 'Turned on' With Light, Sound

For 20 consecutive nights last month the Boston Public Garden was "turned on", and if you were one of the million or more persons who saw, and heard, the spectacle, you were probably turned on, too.

Michael Cain, formerly of Kingston, son of Professors Joe and Matene Cain, is one of seven Yale research artists who created this experiment. "We use the environment as a medium," he says.

The seven call their group "Pulsa" and have previously shown work in New York City, and in New Haven in the Yale School of Art and Architecture Gallery. Michael, an English major graduate of Harvard, decided he wanted to go into the art field, and now has the bachelor's and master of fine arts degrees from Yale.

In Boston, 55 xenon strobe lights, placed under water in the Garden's four-acre pond, and 52 poly-planar speakers placed above water around the pond's perimeter, were programmed by elements of analog and digital computers, a punch paper tape reader, a signal synthesizer and magnetic tape.

Because the lighting fixtures were not visible beneath the water's surface, and the speakers were inconspicuous, the demonstration was seen entirely as light flashes and sound presences specifically located in the park's landscape.

The Boston experiment was arranged as part of the city's study of new possibilities in urban lighting. Films, TV, the complex interplay of urban sounds and lights, and experiences such as driving on highways at night through darting streams of automobile headlights, have involved our culture in areas of new perception, Cain explains.

"The Boston Show literally consisting of high speed pattern change, multiplexing, and audio-visual non-synchrony made meaningful and pleasurable experiences which are constantly present in our daily lives. In this sense, the programmed environment is organically unified with its urban surroundings."

Next Monday the Pulsa group will give a demonstration of "light sound as time and as physiological environment" in the URI Fine Arts Center starting at 8, with a roundtable discussion, and audience participation through questions.

There will also be the Harvard University "Light as a Creative Medium" exhibition, a joint effort of Harvard and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, planned and designed by Prof. Gyorgy Kepes.